



EDDIE GENTRY

Steve Crenshaw, 16, is wheeled out of a vacant house on the 4700 block of Fairfax Avenue Friday morning after he was shot and wounded by an Oakland police officer. The incident marks the third officer-involved shooting this week.

Week's police shooting tally: 3

FRITZ, RANDY

■ Teen wounded after startling officer in abandoned house

SAT MAR 12 1994

By Tracie Reynolds
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — An Oakland police officer shot and wounded a 16-year-old boy Friday morning after the youth startled him by jumping out of an upstairs bedroom during a house search, investigators said.

The incident marks the third time this week an Oakland police officer has shot and wounded someone.

The youth, Steve Crenshaw, a junior at Fremont High School, was listed in critical but stable condition at Highland Hospital Friday after undergoing surgery for a gunshot wound to the left arm and upper torso.

He was unarmed when he was shot.

"He's not a bad person. He just liked to

play basketball," said Jamall Beckham, 16, one of Crenshaw's classmates.

"He didn't deserve to get shot for this."

Crenshaw and a group of 12 youths between the ages of 14 and 19 allegedly cut school and broke into a recently vacated house at 4701 Fairfax Ave. to celebrate the birthday of one of the youths, said Lt. Mike Sims.

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Youth jumped out officer from upstairs room

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Investigators found cigars, alcohol and evidence of marijuana inside the two-story tan stucco house, Sims said. The youths were not armed.

Two residents who live on the block called police at about 10 a.m. to report a group of people trespassing on the vacant property. Crenshaw and his friends were partying in an upstairs bedroom when they heard noises on the first floor, Sims said.

Crenshaw, apparently unaware that the people entering the house were police officers, tried to scare the unexpected visitors off by quickly opening the bedroom door.

When he did, he startled Officer Randy Fritz — a four-year patrol veteran — who had been searching the house with his semi-automatic handgun drawn, police said.

The gun accidentally discharged and hit Crenshaw once in the upper arm, Sims said. The bullet cut through Crenshaw's left bicep, hitting him in the side and leaving fragments in his abdomen and back.

"Officers frequently encounter dope dealers in abandoned, vacant houses who are considered armed and dangerous," Sims said.

Fritz was put on three days paid administrative leave.

Responding to the recent rash of officer-involved shootings, Oakland Police Chief Joseph Samuels said in a prepared statement that the department is committed to a thorough review of policies, training and tactics related to firearms discharges.

"Every effort, however, must be made to assure that accountability in police-citizen contacts remains a mutual obligation so that the lives and safety of officers and citizens are not imperiled or reduced to split-second judgments," Samuels said.

To strengthen relations with the community and help ease tensions, Samuels appealed to members of the local clergy to participate in a series of ride-alongs with police officers beginning next month.

Further details about the so-called "Cops and Clergy" program will be released later.

Earlier this week, an Oakland police officer shot and wounded 31-year-old Luke Johnson of Piedmont Monday night after he allegedly stole a taxi in San Francisco and attempted to run over officers trying to arrest him.

The next day, a 25-year-old transient suspected of kidnapping three people was shot and wounded by an Oakland police officer after a high-speed chase across the Bay Bridge.

Harry Harris contributed to this report.

Police shooting victim alleg

WED. MAR 16 1994

By Tracie Reynolds
and Harry Harris
STAFF WRITERS

OAKLAND — The 16-year-old boy who police say was accidentally shot by an officer last week accused the department on Tuesday of lying to cover up what he believes was excessive police force during a routine house search.

Oakland police, however, say physical evidence and taped statements from witnesses corroborate the police officer's version of what happened Friday at a recently vacated house at 4701 Fairfax Ave.

They say the officer — Randy Fritz, a four-year veteran — accidentally fired after the youth startled him by quickly opening a bedroom door.

It was the third officer-involved shooting of the week.

But a still-hospitalized Stephen Crenshaw insisted Tuesday that's not what happened.

He said he was just standing in the bedroom and never touched the door.

"It's a lie. I was just standing there. I had my hands to my sides. I don't know why he said he was startled," Crenshaw said from his room at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, where he is recovering from a gunshot wound.

The bullet tore through his left arm and fragmented as it entered his side. Pieces lodged in his stomach and near his spine.

"I still don't know why he shot me."

Crenshaw's mother, Linda Robinson, 40, said she has already hired lawyer John Burris, who has represented others over the years in police misconduct cases, to investigate the shooting. She said she wants Fritz to be punished.

"I want him to suffer as much as my son is suffering," she said. "I don't think he should have a job. He should be taken off the force."

Mike Rains, a lawyer representing Fritz, said "pure and simple, it was an accident. The young man is absolutely wrong if he says he didn't open the door. I don't know what his motivation is other than posturing for a lawsuit."

Police and Crenshaw agree that he and 12 friends between the ages of 14 and 19 cut school Friday and went to the two-story tan stucco house to have a birthday party for one of the youths. But their stories differ after that.

Investigators say the youths broke into the house, attracting the attention of neighbors who called police. But Crenshaw said

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JULIE BROWN — Staff

Stephen Crenshaw 16, who was shot last week by a police officer, lies in his hospital bed.

the house was unlocked because he was a friend of the previous occupants, who moved to Sacramento less than two weeks ago.

While searching the house, Fritz and another officer heard noises coming from the bedroom. Fritz was just about to open the door when it was suddenly shoved open, investigators said. Deputy Chief of Police Tom Donohue said Fritz may have fired on reflex or the door may have hit the weapon, causing it to discharge.

Sgt. Tom Swisher said the 12 other people in the room gave taped statements to police after the shooting. Not everyone saw what happened at the door, but several did say Crenshaw opened the door suddenly before he was shot.

One 16-year-old told investigators Crenshaw "was going to open the door to scare the person away. He opened the door real fast and when he did I heard one gunshot," Swisher said.

Donohue said Crenshaw's wound is consistent with a move to push open the door. But Crenshaw said he turned to his right to protect himself after he saw the officer standing in the doorway with a gun.

Officer has SAT AUG -5 1995 2nd gun accident

By Harry Harris

STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — A police officer investigating reports of gunfire at an East Oakland park early Friday accidentally shot and killed a 41-year-old woman he confronted in a park bathroom, police said.

It was the second time in 17 months Officer Randy Fritz has been involved in an accidental shooting. In March 1994, he wounded a 16-year-old boy while investigating a house break-in.

The dead woman was identified as Shirley Ann Milligan of Oakland. Police said she had a knife in her hand that Fritz did not see when he shot her.

Lt. Ralph Lacer said the fatal shooting was a tragic accident. "The officer said he had no intention of shooting (Milligan) deliberately. He is very upset."

The shooting happened just after 6 a.m. at Elmhurst Park at 96th Avenue and B Street. It was not known what Milligan was doing at the park.

Lacer said Fritz was one of several officers who responded to the park to investigate a call from nearby residents that someone was shooting a gun in the park. The park is known for crime-related problems, notably drug dealing, police said.

A man officers found in the park said he had seen some men firing a gun and pointed out the bathroom where he said the men had run to, Lacer said.

Fritz, with his semi-automatic pistol in one hand and flashlight in the other, went to the darkened bathroom, announced he was a police officer and started to step inside.

Lacer said Fritz told investigators the woman suddenly came at him and bumped into him, startling him and knocking him backward. As Fritz was going backward, his gun accidentally discharged, the bullet hitting Milligan in the head, Lacer said.

Lacer said police don't know if Milligan had been hiding from the gunman in the bathroom, perhaps thought Fritz was the gunman or didn't want to be arrested. "We don't know if she was in the process of trying to flee or was trying to protect herself," Lacer said.

Lacer said investigators are continuing to look into the circumstances of the shooting and would appreciate calls from anyone who may have information. But, he said, "right now it looks like an accidental shooting, a tragic incident."

In March 1994, Fritz shot 16-year-old Stephen Crenshaw while investigating a reported break-in at an abandoned house in the 4700 block of Fairfax Avenue. A civil suit against Fritz and the city is pending in U.S. District Court.

Lacer said he could not comment about the 1994 shooting because of the litigation. But he did say that incident "will certainly be part of this investigation."

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Crenshaw and about a dozen friends ages 14 to 19 had cut school and gone to the house to have a birthday party for a friend. Neighbors saw the youths enter the home and called police.

While searching the house, Fritz heard noises in a bedroom and was about to open the door when it was shoved open by Crenshaw. Police said the startled Fritz fired his pistol, the bullet going through Crenshaw's left arm and lodging in his stomach. Fritz maintained the shooting was accidental, but Crenshaw and his family called it deliberate.

Family angry over 'accidental' shooting death

SAT AUG 12 1995
By Arana Lynch
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Allistine Milligan enjoyed it when her daughter Shirley took her out for dinner Aug. 2.

She did not know it would be the last time she would see her daughter alive.

Two days later, her 41-year-old daughter was fatally shot by police Officer Randy Fritz in what investigators called a tragic accident.

"I'm angry, I'm hurt and I am not functioning right," a still-grieving Milligan, 60, said Friday, a day after burying her daughter.

"They should get paranoid cops off the force," Milligan said. "As far as I'm concerned, it wasn't accidental."

Police said Fritz accidentally shot Shirley Milligan shortly after 6 a.m. Aug. 4 at Elmhurst Park at 96th Avenue and B Street while investigating reports of gunfire in the park.

Fritz shot Shirley Milligan in the head after she bumped him running out of a bathroom that Fritz had just started to enter.

The park is known for crime-related problems, notably drug dealing.

It is unknown what Shirley Milligan was doing in the park, and Milligan refused to comment about problems in her daughter's past that included drug abuse.

Milligan said, "Whatever she did, it was not worth taking her life."

Milligan said she has hired attorney John Burris to file a lawsuit over the shooting.

Milligan's family remembers her as a sweet person who dreamed about designing clothes. At one time, they said, she studied law at City College of San Francisco.

"She was always trying to help somebody," Allistine Milligan said.

The accidental shooting is not the first for Fritz, who investigators said was deeply upset. He has not yet returned to work.

In March 1994, Fritz shot 16-year-old Stephen Crenshaw while investigating a reported break-in at an abandoned house. He said he accidentally shot Crenshaw when he was startled by the youth suddenly opening a door to a room he was about to enter.

A civil suit filed by Crenshaw and his family against Fritz and the city is pending.

Boy sues cop for shooting him

SAT MAR 11 1995

By Danielle Cass

STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — A 16-year-old Oakland boy shot by an Oakland police officer last year has sued the officer, the police department, the police chief and the city of Oakland alleging assault and negligence.

Stephen M. Crenshaw, Jr., was shot through the left arm and stomach on March 11, 1994, when police officers entered a vacant house on Fairfax Avenue in which he and several friends were having a birthday party. Neighbors had reported trespassers in the vacant house.

According to the suit, filed Friday in Alameda County Superior Court, Crenshaw was unarmed and standing three feet inside a bedroom when Officer Randy Fritz opened the bedroom door and shot him.

But Fritz, a four-year veteran, and several of Crenshaw's friends who saw the shooting said Crenshaw startled the officer by quickly opening the bedroom door.

The suit claims that the shooting proves that Oakland police officers often use excessive and deadly force without reason, and that Oakland

Police Chief Joseph Samuels ignores it.

Oakland Assistant City Attorney Randolph Hall said he had not yet seen the suit and could not comment.

No one was available at the police department Friday to comment on the suit.

The suit cites false arrest and imprisonment, assault and battery, negligence and negligent selection, employment, training, supervision and discipline on the part of the police department. The suit does not name a specific amount of monetary damages.

Shooting prompts officer's dismissal

Chief overturns ruling of board

By Harry Harris
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — A police officer has been fired after Police Chief Joseph Samuels decided the officer's 1995 fatal shooting of a woman inside a park bathroom was unjustified.

Officer Randy Fritz was fired by the city for violating laws and regulations of the department and duty performance standards, officials confirmed to The Oakland Tribune.

Police departments are prevented by state law from announcing officer firings. They can, however, confirm details of cases.

The department's Board of Review ruled 5-4 the woman's shooting was accidental. But sources said the narrow vote came after lengthy discussion that Fritz had been negligent in some areas.

After reviewing the case and talking to some board members, Samuels decided the shooting was not justifiable and overturned the ruling.

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office has concluded no criminal negligence occurred in Fritz's fatal shooting Aug. 4 of Shirley Ann Milligan, 41, in the darkened bathroom of Elmhurst Park at 96th Avenue and B Street. Police had come to the park to investigate reports of gunfire.

Besides that shooting, Fritz was also involved in another shooting that had been ruled accidental: the wounding of Steven Crenshaw, 16, in March 1994. Crenshaw and some friends were having a birthday party in an abandoned house.

The officer's attorney, Christopher Platten, said Fritz was deeply affected by the woman's death and sorry for what happened, but "it was not his fault."

"Pure and simple, it was an ac-

17/62	South Bend	SU	86/59
18/64	Spokane	SH	75/51
'5/53	Springfield, Ill.	SU	87/63
1/70	Springfield, Mo.	MS	88/67
14/77	St. Louis	SU	89/67
10/70	Syracuse	PC	76/51

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cidental discharge," he said. "We are prepared to demonstrate (that) in whatever forum the case is ultimately reviewed."

Platten said he and Fritz plan to appeal the May 17 firing and are waiting to see if the matter will be heard by an arbitrator or if they will take it to the city's Civil Service Commission.

According to sources, two key areas of alleged negligence occurred on Fritz's part.

For one, sources said, Fritz should not have entered the darkened bathroom alone. Other officers were present in the park and the sources said the bathroom could have been surrounded and the person inside made to come out — by sending in a police dog, for example, or using tear gas.

Second, sources said Fritz already had

his finger on the trigger of his newly issued .40 caliber Glock semiautomatic pistol when he entered the bathroom.

Officers are trained to keep their fingers on the outside of the trigger guard until they are absolutely sure they might have to fire.

Sources also said that after the March 1994 shooting, Fritz had taken a street survival course offered by a private company and had also received routine departmental training on positioning of the trigger finger.

Platten challenged the negligence allegations.

He said the shooting "resulted from unique problems associated with the weapon Officer Fritz was just issued. Any officer in a similar circumstance with that weapon would, more likely than not, have also experienced an accidental discharge

because of the training in place at the time."

He also insisted Fritz did not have his finger on the trigger when he entered the bathroom.

Sources said the earlier shooting, coupled with the issues raised during the board hearing and the fact Fritz received additional training after the first shooting, played key roles in Samuels' decision.

Platten said, "We believe we will be able to show termination in this case was unwarranted and there are no justified grounds for discipline. This was an accident, pure and simple."

The Crenshaw family recently settled a federal suit against Fritz and the city for \$150,000. Although the Milligan family has gotten a court order preserving certain evidence, they have not yet filed a lawsuit.

Attorney John Burris, who represents

ger, having no back-up

both families, said Fritz's firing was "a long time coming."

"This is an officer not suited to be an officer in Oakland," Burris said. He said the firing "is a good signal to people in the community."

"It shows the chief is not going to tolerate excessive force and is going to review cases closely and not accept an officer's word just on face value."

It was not known what Milligan was doing at the park at the time of the shooting. Nearby residents had called police to report gunfire in the park and one witness directed them to the bathroom, claiming he saw some of the gunmen run into it.

Fritz told shooting investigators he announced he was a police officer before entering the bathroom. The woman suddenly came at him and bumped into him, startling him and knocking him backward.

He said as he was going backward his gun discharged, hitting Milligan in the head. The woman had a knife in her hand that Fritz did not see when he shot her. Investigators said at the time they did not know if the woman was trying to flee or was trying to protect herself.

In 1994, Fritz shot Crenshaw in the left arm and stomach while investigating a reported break-in at an abandoned house in the 4700 block of Fairfax Avenue.

Crenshaw and about a dozen friends ages 14 to 19 had cut school and had gone to the house to have a birthday party for a friend. Police were called by neighbors who saw the youths enter the house.

While searching the house, Fritz heard noises in a bedroom. Before he could open the door, Crenshaw shoved it open and startled Fritz, who fired his pistol once. The bullet went through Crenshaw's arm, lodging in his stomach.